

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) introduced legislation today that would allow “medically necessary” dental care for seniors and the disabled to be covered under Medicare.

“This bill will improve health care for thousands of senior citizens and save taxpayers millions of dollars in Medicare costs,” said Congressman Hoyer. “Under current law, Medicare does not consistently provide coverage for dental care that is medically necessary. However, untreated dental problems can lead to expensive and dangerous complications when other unrelated procedures are performed. The failure to treat these conditions has both a high cost in suffering for seniors and a high price tag for Medicare. A simple dental checkup and proper treatment before surgery can prevent these unnecessary costs and significantly improve the quality of life of our senior citizens.”

The Medically Necessary Dental Care Act would expand the number of dental care procedures that can be covered by Medicare. Under current law, for example, Medicare covers dental extractions before head and neck radiation therapy, but does not cover similar dental treatment before a kidney transplant or prosthetic heart valve replacement.

Many Medicare beneficiaries undergoing treatment for certain serious medical conditions need to have oral infections removed to ensure that their immune systems are not compromised before their physicians can perform other procedures. The Hoyer legislation would give patients and their physicians more flexibility in ensuring every Medicare beneficiary receives the most appropriate medical care.

The Medically Necessary Dental Care Act would provide clarity and consistency by amending the Social Security Act to provide coverage under Medicare Part B for medically necessary dental care in conjunction with treatment of an individual with the following diagnoses: prosthetic heart valve replacement surgery; cancer of the head or neck; Lymphoma; Leukemia; and organ transplantation.

###